The Rialto

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The Rialto was on Central Street in Lowell. Downstairs was a bowling alley run by a guy name Dominic who also rented the rehearsal room above the bowling alley on the second floor. The only other occupant in the building was a massage parlor downstairs on the first floor next to the entrance to go upstairs to the practice rooms. Most if not all musicians who rented a room over the years never bothered to go to the massage parlor or were even interested . I don't think anyone who rented ever spent time in the bowling alley either. When the parlor door was left open it smelled like sweat,semen and perfume. Sometimes the woman would have a cigarette outside where they could be seen from the hallway window upstairs.

I would guess there were six or seven rooms facing Central Street and six rooms facing the the back of the building. The front rooms had windows the back rooms didn't. Lots of bands and musicians rehearsed or just played music there . Some recorded there and even did some filming in there.

Many of the local bands had a room there at one time or another. Most of the best musicians in and around Lowell spent many hours and their days there and for a few years they were either playing in a band or just jamming with someone who had a room there.

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A few people gave music lessons. Hip or most of the time just regular people would stop by at all hours of the night. It was then that all the good jams were happening, especially early in the morning when the bars and clubs closed when musicians who had been out playing somewhere in the city or back from a gig would stop in.

It was some of the best jams you could ever hear because a lot of the visitors or tenants were really ready to jam more after the gig and do the music they really enjoyed or just hang out and enjoy the vibe and the scene if they were burnt out from the gig. Some people weren't in bands and had no other place to play music with anyone except at the Rialto . If they knew someone there or got a chance to play and were okay or got better over time they could be accepted or at least

recognized for the moment.

No one got to drunk or two high and if they did someone there with a half a brain would make sure they were okay. In fact thinking back there were six or seven regulars that either had rooms there or were there hanging out that kept an eye on things and the going ons. The cops never bothered us and we were on the main drag with the front windows open blasting music out till three in the morning sometimes . We had our own sanctuary inside and kept it there. If the cops ever did show up it would be an officer we knew or that someone would know them who was there. Sometimes the beat cop would show up and hang out. It was a cool after hours on the weekends and sometimes during the week, depending on who was there at the time.

People who worked at city hall or in the community found their way to the Rialto at least once in their life in those late night hours or maybe even in the day time when they had nothing to do.

Lowell had the Commodore Club later know as Mr C's was the biggest and best place to hear live music in the area. National acts played there and local bands would usually opening for them or play before them and also perform there other times as well. You name a national act from 1965 until 1980 and I'll bet they played there. And if they didn't play there they weren't ever in the area anyways.

This helped out the local guys who played instruments or were in bands or even just jammed with their friends in Lowell. The got to back up interesting and popular bands from around the country and sometimes from around the world and sometimes hang out together or just hear each others music and take in the area while they were here. The are a bunch of inside stories about well known people in music including bands,band members or even managers would hear about the Rialto and find their way there if they didn't have a gig somewhere else the next day. It was usually the road crews of the bands that would end up there late at night. We got a few groupies from out of town who popped in after Mister C's closed for the night who were following some hit band from Boston around,who by the way had left the city already.

They were there for less than two hours before

some local chicks gave them a tongue lashing like they had never heard in there life. They left in tears. Lowell chicks didn't have to be drunk to be tough and tell someone what they thought. They just had to be in Lowell. Their Lowell.

Before The Rialto closed in the early nineteen eighties it had the most interesting assortment of musicians from Lowell and the surrounding area that jammed and hung out together in its whole history. Even going back to the nineteen fifties when it first opened to help bring in extra cash for the owner.

Not only could you practice with your band there any day or night and any time you could also rent a room yourself or with someone else and play whatever music you wanted whenever you wanted. There were a few bands at the time but it was mostly musicians who rented the rooms. There were a few teachers but they were there usually only during the day. At night it was a different story .

It had the most innovative and creative people you could ever imagine. It became a family who looked out for each other and had each others back and made sure no one got too fucked up or so fucked up on anything that they would hurt themselves or someone else. The thing was that there was usually someone not involved with playing music but just hanging out or there who was from the community and maybe a nurse or doctor or someone who had medical experience who would get involved and take charge of the situation.

In the first front room was a guy named Sidney Hipple. He was a music teacher for handicapped people especially children and people who had lost a limb and had lost the ability to play. Mostly it was an arm or maybe just a hand or if they were lucky a finger or two. One musician named Ronnie Gendreau who was a top jazz player in Lowell was a friend of Sidneys and had lost a finger and continued to play after he adjusted to the lost. He hung out at the Rialto and was an inspiration to many musicians of that era. Some of Sid’s students had serious developmental or brain abnormalities and difficulty finding their way in life and he gave them something to look forward to and an opportunity to enter a comfortable world of his studio and forget their disabilities and any drawbacks that made them feel left out of the human race and the society they lived in. Sidney only accepted participants, he never called the

people he was involved with students because he felt it could create a distance between him and the people he was working with,that could not learn or be accepted anywhere else because of their limitations.

He would remind who ever was a regular or stayed for a while that if you weren't really incapable in some way that was serious enough and you were not excluded from enjoying a reasonable existence then there was other avenues that they could follow and leave the learning and study to the people who really needed it and could make better use of what was available at his establishment in Lowell.

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Sidney played guitar but also developed programs that utilized the Korg Keyboards Work stations he owned and practice on and created his unique style of music on. These were the Korg Karma, his favorite for easy introduction for anyone to develop on,the Korg Pa900 for more advanced study when possible and the Korg O1Wfd which was his first Korg Work station and the one that produced his guitar sounding screeching leads but had other practical uses too. These gave anyone not only the ability to learn the fundamentals of creativity but to stay interested enough to stick with it long enough to develop and advance and find a place in humanity even if it was only for an hour or two and sometimes only for a few minutes.

Everyone that found Sidney's musical nest atop the bowling alley even if it was only once and for even just a moment they were never the same. Whoever stayed became part of a special environment and life situation that you couldn't find no where else. Sidney's commitment made the atmosphere easy for anyone with limited capabilities to navigate and be comfortable in finding their way was always unique and original and made interesting. As he would say Life can be an adventure and a rare experience if you look at it the right way at the right time and with the right person. Don't squander it and complain about how life sucks and the injustice of living in this world .

7

When the time you spend is not even 10 % your interest is so low and irregular that if you were even 20 % concerned it would be a surprise.
How motivated are you ? Maybe 30 % if you're lucky. If your enthusiasm level is below 40 % how far

can you go?

He only taught people who he deemed to have the determination and grit to follow through on their sincerity and general interest and commitment to the basic rules and guidelines and to trust the process. If you wanted to improve you needed to commit the time,be interested,be motivated, and be as enthusiastic as possible. If you didn't improve or didn't put in the time and effort you either dropped out or were asked to just observe and they would either snap out of it or leave.

Sometimes a new comer would start to question what the purpose of his process was and that they may not have the time to commit. He would usually say something like “You work a regular full time job, usually for someone who could care less about your being but when it comes to giving your inner self,your inner being some relief and maybe a break from life’s chaos and distractions”. Becoming a person and a authentic member of the human race is as important as becoming a creative individual. If you can't spend at least ten or twenty hours a week involved in the thing that could free you from a life of inactivity and being mundane and add real meaning to an otherwise unproductive life devoid of common interest in your fellow man or woman. I must have heard him say “My interest and consideration in of you, Will never be less than yours in me”. Lance Gargoyle was a original song writer,instrumentalist and all around offbeat character who would follow in Sidney's footsteps and later in life bring the days he spent at the Rialto back at his Studio A101 at Western Avenue Studios.